

The Media and the Dilemma of Covering National Crises in a Global Village: An Analysis of the Insecurity Situation in Northern Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

The mass media has been described by scholars as the eyes of the people. While performing their surveillance function, it is expected that the media get stories that are newsworthy and report them in the right perspective and professionally. Within the ethics of journalism, the journalist is guided by the social responsibility theory which mandates him/her to act as a protector of the society from stories that are capable of causing disunity in the country. This tends to create a state of dilemma in the mind of the journalist either becoming a lover of society or its enemy. The activities of the social media did not help matters in this situation where content is either supplied in its crude form or intentionally garnished with potent spices, thereby over diluting it. Owing to the fact that the content of news is targeted at the audience, the Two Step Flow Theory of Mass Communication plays a major role on how the audience in Nigeria become end users of what is given to them. With opinion leaders like religious leaders and community and right group leaders actively involved in mind twisting games with their adherents, understanding becomes seriously influenced by how these group of people interpret content. This has polarised the society along some existing imaginary lines of division in the country. This paper seeks to project the different angles the media has covered the insecurity crises in Nigeria especially the Boko Haram as well as the various invasions by unknown people across the northern part of the country. The agenda setting theory, two-step flow theory and the framing theory will be used to anchor the paper.

Key words:

Framing, Citizen journalists, Social media, Grapevine, Agenda setting, Social responsibility

INTRODUCTION

According to Harold Lasswell. The mass media performs the following functions: Surveillance of the environment, correlation of different elements of society and transmission of culture. Charles Wright added the function of entertainment to functions of the mass media. In our world today, access to news has been facilitated by technology, hence, people get news realtime, irrespective of distance or relief. According to Henderson (2004), The news media has become a 24-hour presence, endlessly streaming and pumping images and information through the air, beaming it down from space, pushing and pulling it through cables and phone lines across the Internet. For a country like Nigeria with a rich media history in Africa, people have cultivated the culture of relying on the mass media for information. According to Oso and Pate (2011:xii), “there is no doubt that the Nigerian media have developed within the social context provided by the country’s political economy and turbulent history.” To this effect, there is the need for the media to report things in their true perspective. Where the mass media has become the most reliable organ of hearing from government. It is important that the people are not taken for granted.

Nigeria with multiple tribes and religions has witnessed a number of ethno-religious crises, including a civil war that almost divided the country and which resulted in the death of several people. As a result of these already traceable lines of division, issues bordering on religion and tribe are usually seen as very sensitive and are treated with caution. In situations where this is not taken seriously, the consequences are usually severe. During democratic governance, it is expected that the press will enjoy total freedom. Hence, the media will always clamour for democracy. According to Ogbondah (1997), studies indicate that the Nigerian press had greater freedom under civilian governments than they did under military governments. Randall (1993) explains that the media play a watchdog role and become more outspoken during the democratization process because restrictions are removed and opposition groups need to create a following with the media’s help. For a country like Nigeria where the military had ruled for over three decades, in most cases, caging the media, democracy is a welcome development. Hence, with democracy comes freedom of the press but sometimes, freedom if not guarded can lead to total abuse of the term.

Security threats in Nigeria have been a regular occurrence throughout the history of the country. Restiveness linked to various causes have occurred at one time or the other but crises

which have dovetailed into ethno religious crises have occurred at higher frequency in the northern part of the country. Often times, there have been cases of riots in the northern part of the country, most of which have some dose of ethno religious undertone, with a few isolated cases that were more or less political in nature. Even in such cases, perpetrators would find a way to bring ethnicity or religion in to the picture. With the press expected to be a neutral body in the reportage of crises, the citizens will rely on these media for authentic stories related to crises. This means that if the trust on the media is there, there will be little or no room for the grapevine. Where the press fails to act accordingly, the grapevine will supply the news while the media houses try to paint the true picture. In some situations where this happens, it may be a bit too late by the time the true nature of the story is reflected.

The media and national interest

Henderson (2004) explained that one of the most difficult problems for the news media is how to report fairly on events relating to racial and ethnic groups. In Nigeria, the problems are many considering the multiple diversities in the country. The landscape of the media in Nigeria especially the broadcast media has always taken cognizance of national interest. This is not farfetched from the fact that it was taxpayers' monies that were used to set up the early broadcast stations in the country. The power of the broadcast media especially radio in Nigeria dwells in the fact that despite poor road networks, the radio reaches all nooks and crannies of the country. Perhaps this explains why whenever there is a coup d'etat, the radio, especially the Federal Radio Corporation will be the medium to authenticate the news. Even in terms of content, the media houses always try to reflect the diversities in the country. The national broadcasters: Nigerian Television Authority and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria have by virtue of the broadcasting laws of the monopoly of operating on the frequencies that have the broadest reach. Hence their programmes can be reached across villages in the country. These stations have tried to balance content hence reflecting the provisions of the World Radio and Television Council (2000) which identified the following principles as the principles for the operation of public broadcast stations: universality, diversity, independence and distinctiveness.

While it is the duty of the media to provide the people with news as it breaks, in a highly volatile society like Nigeria, there is need to always be cautious of what the public gets. If not for the sake of litigation, for the likelihood of inciting people against each other thereby

leading to death of many and in some cases destruction of media organisations by angry members of the aggrieved public, as was the case of the Miss World Beauty Pageant in 2003. Baran (2012) expressed his fears thus: Without some form of regulation, a ruthless and cunning demagogue might be able to use hate propaganda to gain power in the United States. To guard against likely abuse of the regulation process by those concerned, Curran (1991) explained the recommendation given by the Hutchins commission:

[They] endorsed professional responsibility ... [as] a way of reconciling market flaws with the traditional conception of the democratic role of the media. [The Hutchins Commission's report] asserted journalists' commitment to higher goals—neutrality, detachment, a commitment to truth. It involved the adoption of certain procedures for verifying facts, drawing on different sources, presenting rival interpretations. In this way, the pluralism of opinion and information, once secured through the clash of adversaries in the free market, could be recreated through the "internal pluralism" of monopolistic media. Market pressures to sensationalize and trivialize the presentation of news could be offset by a commitment to inform. (Curran, 1991, p. 98).

While painting the picture from a Nigerian perspective, Ali (2013) pointed out that the press ought to tread wearily and exercise discretion if it is to preserve its freedom. In the light of this national culture, religion, security and tradition should be treated with utmost care more-so that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic state.

The media and its influence on the society

The media has enormous influence on society. According to Mehraj, Bhat and Mehraj (2014), the mass media occupy a high proportion of our leisure time: people spend, on average, 25 hours per week watching television, and they also find time for radio, cinema, magazines and newspapers. For children, watching television takes up a similar amount of time to that spent at school or with family and friends. As much as people get attached to the media, it becomes part of their lives and at the long run, has some degree of influence on the way people do their day to day activities. People would want to listen to the weather forecast every morning before they go out on businesses. People will always wait for the day's news to authenticate any rumour they have heard. The media has helped in shaping people's orientation of the world and through the mass media, people have been able to push for societal changes around the world.

The most obvious link between mass communication and policy making is public opinion. Policymakers have traditionally viewed the media agenda as a shortcut to public opinion because they (rightly or wrongly) assume that the general public is heavily influenced by

what they read in the newspapers or watch on television (Herbst 1998). In line with this thinking, it can be said that what people consume from the media can also influence their opinions on the content. Thereby showing that just as it has an influence on policy making, so does it influence the actions of the audience (directly or indirectly).

The radio is the most important instrument of mass influence that exists anywhere (Welch, 1993). This statement was attributed to one of Adolf Hitler's ministers, Joseph Goebbels. The power of the traditional media in influencing the people can best be seen in the Rwandan genocide. According to Yanagizawa – Drott (2014), the radio station Radio T´el´evision Libre des Mille Collines (RTL) led the propaganda efforts by broadcasting inflammatory messages calling for the extermination of the Tutsi minority. The result of this call from the radio station is mass killings that got the whole world talking till today. The broadcasts had a significant impact on participation in killings by both militia groups and ordinary civilians. An estimated 51,000 perpetrators, or approximately 10 percent of the overall violence, can be attributed to the station. The broadcasts increased militia violence not only directly by influencing behaviour in villages with radio reception, but also indirectly by increasing participation in neighbouring villages. In fact, spill overs are estimated to have caused more militia violence than the direct effects (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014).

The social media which has turned the world into a global village also has influenced people's opinions. It has brought so much ease to the process of communication. Its influence can be felt in all the sectors of society. However, when used with malicious intentions, it has sent the wrong signals to the people thereby resulting to violence of different dimensions. The Arab Spring of 2010 is an example of how the social media can stimulate the minds of the people and bring about a violent protest. Within a year, this wave left major changes in its wake: revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt that culminated in the downfall of these two regimes; a civil war in Libya resulting in the fall of its regime; civil uprisings in Syria and Yemen; major protests in Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, Oman, Iraq, and minor protests in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan (Salih, 2011). Most of the developments that followed were fuelled by the social media as people continuously gave updates of situations around them, thereby leading to more troubles as the days proceeded.

Beyond the fact that the media contributes in influencing the conducts of people around the world, some schools of thought have been of the opinion that the content that fuels these

crises are often the manipulations of the elite class. As a result of extensive research in the area of media effect, Mass Communication scholars have concluded that media messages in most cases do not have the hypodermic needle effect on the audience. It is believed that media messages are usually subjected to further analysis and dilution by opinion leaders who help in influencing the decisions of the people. This statement was confirmed thus: following a long tradition in the social sciences on the role of social interactions in general, and their importance in intermediating mass media effects in particular, a direct persuasion effect could influence the spatial diffusion of violence, even beyond the immediate areas of media reception. One would expect this to be the case if violence begets violence, leading to contagion, or if information and beliefs spread via social networks (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014).

The Nigerian media landscape: A historical overview

The fundamental roles of the media with respect to the coverage of issues related to insecurity in the country will be that of surveillance, information and education. Because of the nature of the news and the restive nature of affected areas, few media organisations can boast of physical presence at flash points. This leaves room for rumours and fake news to be spread all over. The only authentic source of news in this case is either from the public relations unit of the Nigerian Army, some few foreign media organisations and through some journalists who the insurgents have given exclusive access to them and thereby becoming their mouthpiece whenever they deem it fit for the world to hear them.

The media is a principal player in the arena of national security. If the press decides to be subjective, it becomes a threat to national security. According to Ali (2013), national security in Nigeria has been greatly threatened since independence. When Nigeria attained independence in 1960, the mass media orientation shifted towards reinforcing tribal and sectional loyalties in preference to national unity, identity and integration. The media became parochial in their content. They dedicate themselves to the articulation of particular ethnic interest (Udoudo & Asak, 2008) Press reports during this period greatly heightened tension, which created suspicion among the citizenry and almost led to the disintegration of the corporate existence of the country.

In the 1920s, the press became more political, especially after the 1922 Clifford constitution which allowed four Africans to be nominated and elected to the Legislative Council for

Africans and form political parties (Oyewole & Lucas, 2000). When political turmoil began in the late 1960s, the press, even those privately owned, took regional and ethnic sides. The failure to support one's region or ethnic group meant being "labelled a saboteur and an unpatriotic element" (Uche, 1989, p. 99). Onjefu (2012) further explained that further to these biases, the political animosity which developed, between the Yoruba and Igbo during the period under review saw the media taking sides with their various ethnic groups. Arifalo (2001) fingered editorials as the live bullets used by the media to fight the war between the two tribes, resulting into the use of unpalatable names on opinion leaders from the two ethnic groups. The venom of the editorials were very potent and according to Arifalo, by September of 1948, the war between the two tribes became explosive that the then governor of Nigeria, Macpherson had to step in to put things in order. Emergence of newspapers in the north was a reaction to the negative portrayals of the northern part of the country by the southern press which is dominated by the Lagos axis.

According to Onjefu (2012), northern politicians complained that issues concerning their region were not given serious attention by the southern media. Kukah (1996) went further to state that sentiments of the southern papers went beyond ethnicity to portray the north as the backwaters of civilization, wallowing in the stranglehold of an Islamic feudal system. With the picture painted so far, the media industry in the country became polarised along regional lines, broadly with the southern press based in Lagos, while the northern press had its headquarters in Kaduna. Unfortunately, the orientation of the media and the mind-set of some Nigerians are still tilted towards the picture painted above.

The advent of the new media helped in facilitating the spread of messages that preach division instead of messages of unity. A former Minister of Aviation had described the Igbos from the eastern part of the country as those who introduced tribalism in southern Nigeria's politics in 1948. At some other time, a former vice chancellor of one of the federal universities in the country had in an interview justified why herdsmen must kill in order to feed their cattle. He accused the southern press of bias in reportage of activities related to northern Nigeria. With this scene in place, it is obvious that the platform for breeding hate and misinformation in the country is the mass media, which if not well managed will lead to cases of insecurity.

The media and insecurity stories in northern Nigeria

In situations of insecurities, the media is expected to act within the provisions of the Social Responsibility Theory by putting the interest of the country above any other thing. The developments in Nigeria from the emergence of Boko Haram to the cases of invasion of farmlands by unknown gunmen has threatened the peaceful co-existence of Nigerians. There is no gain saying that objectivity is fast eroding from the newsrooms in Nigeria with issues like ownership influence, brown envelope syndrome, religious orientation of journalists among others have affected the quality of news content that the public receive these days in the country. The problem of partisanship of the media was captured by Oso and Pate (2011) when they quoted Nnoli as saying:

The press had become infected by the iniquities of ethnicity. Ethnic political beliefs, stereotypes, loyalty, hostility and identity were passed on through the process of socialization. This development intensified into a sub-national ethnic culture further separated in terms of identity and loyalty (p.58)

The aftermath of the statement above is a mind-set that has been built in people over the years thereby creating a set of citizens in the country filled with stereotype towards each other. The manifestation of these stereotypes are some of the factors that reflect in the nature of reportage of sensitive issues affecting particular regions in the country. Some of these stereotypes were reinforced by historical misfortunes like: the civil war, the ethno-religious crises that have taken place at different times in the north where some of these people were either affected directly or indirectly.

The social media operators built on this dangerous foundation. It is more dangerous in case of the social media especially considering the fact that reports are unauthenticated and can be read all over the world. One of the early claims about online news asserted that the limitless space available allows not only for more news to be produced, but also for new ways of presenting the news. However, according to research conducted by Redden and Witschge (2010), they found an abundance of news online, particularly on mainstream broadsheet sites and BBC News online. However, much of this content is homogenous, news organizations often covered stories from the same angles and different news organizations repeatedly presented the same information in their stories be they images, quotes, or descriptive passages. The same scenario is seen when we look at the Nigerian situation where most of the

online sites rely on stories from other sites. Fenton (2010) explained that readers have always recommended stories, provided eyewitness reports and figured as sources in stories, and this has only become easier with e-mail and User Generated Content (UGC) technology. With these new technologies, however, the balance of power has not shifted to users.

The issue of security in northern Nigeria continued to be in the news leading to cases of people leaving the region for fear of attacks. In the centre of the reason behind the movement is the mass media.

The new media has continued to be the most patronised media considering its highly accessible nature.

Analysis of media content in situation of Boko Haram and land invasions

For this paper, the Analysis will be based of semiotic approaches. According to Branston & Starfford (2010), Media, especially news and factual media, have often been thought of as kinds of conveyor belts of meaning between the world and audiences, producing images about or from this or that debate, event or place. Sometimes this involves news, or the hidden secrets of celebrities. But it has often been assumed that the task of such communication is simply to tell the truth about what is reported. Semiotics, however, does not assume that the media work as simple channels of communication. Instead they are seen as actually structuring the very realities which they seem to describe or stand in for. This disturbs powerful notions of 'a truth' to the complex worlds we inhabit which can be straightforwardly accessed and brought back. Branstan & Stafford (2010) define semiotics as a theory of signs, and how they work to produce meanings, or the study of how things come to have significance. This includes signs devised to convey meanings (language, badges) as well as symptoms. In semiotics approaches to analysis of media content, the following positions are held:

First, Saussure argued that words, as verbal signifiers, have an arbitrary relation to their signifieds. They are sometimes marks on paper (T-E-R-R-O-R-I-S-T), sometimes sounds in the air (the spoken word 'terrorist'). There is nothing about actual terrorists which determines that the sound terrorist, or the equivalent marks on the page have to be used to name them. Any pronounceable combination of letters could have been originally decided on. Hence different languages have different words for 'terrorist'.

Second, a sign refers to something other than itself. This is called the signified and it is important to grasp that it is a concept, not a real thing in the world. Though it's probably hard to separate the sound of the word 'terrorist', when you hear it, from your concept of a terrorist, semiotics emphasises that there is a distinction.

Third, semiotics emphasises that our perception of reality is itself constructed and shaped by the words and signs we use, in various social contexts. By having divided the world into imaginative categories, rather than simply labelling it, the language we inherit and use partly determines much of our sense of things, rather than it being the other way round, with 'the real' determining things in a simple way.

The above tells us that the usage of a word in a particular way could trigger stereotype or stigma in a society even if the word were to be less harmful in the actual sense. A simple word that was an ordinary iconic signifier could turn into a blood thirsty beast in a man, thereby justifying the basis for senseless killing. This was what happened in Rwanda where the word, cockroaches became a basis for wiping a large number of people from the surface of the earth, because of the way the radio station had qualified a race to mean.

Within the period of insurgency in the country, various iconic signifiers became common with media across the country. The essence of this work is not to determine how well the media reported an issue but in what context did the media put the issue so that it is sure it is just passing information to the public. Some of the iconic signifiers that are common are:

Boko Haram, terrorists, jihadists, Islamists, herdsmen.

The table below is a collection of some volatile and or misleading messages from some highly placed Nigerians on the insecurity situation in the northern part of the country.

Table 1: Some Randomly Selected Volatile Media Content in Nigerian Media

Media content	Source
Nigeria Boko haram: Militants ‘technically defeated’-	President Muhammadu Buhari, BBC
"Herdsmen plan to ambush and kill me" - Governor Ortom cries out	On Linda Ikeji Blog
Plateau killings are retaliatory – Miyatti Allah	The Nation newspaper
Northern Muslims cannot deny Boko Haram are their children–Bishop Matthew Kukah	On Silverbird Site
Muslim leaders behind herdsmen killings –CAN fires back at JNI	Daily Post
Islamic Terrorist Fulani Herdsmen Kill 12 Christians and More Children as They Sleep in Nigeria.	CROSSMAP
“My driver’s younger brother and five others students of college of education Gidan Waya were ambushed and killed by herdsmen yesterday When we speak we are viewed as trouble makers by the Govt. Well I have seen the pictures and it’s a painful”	Audu Maikori, on twitter
Boko Haram is the armed wing of the opposition party, who is trying to make the country ungovernable.	Fani Kayode on Channels TV
We will write this for all to read. Anyone, soldier or not that kills the Fulani takes a loan repayable one day no matter how long it takes.	Governor Nasiru El- rufai on twitter
You must rise to protect yourselves from these people; if you depend on the armed forces to protect you, you will all die. “I ask all of you to be on the alert and defend your country, defend your state	T. Y. Danjuma, The Vanguard
"If Leah Sharibu dies in the hand of Boko Haram, there will going to be a religious war in the country"	CAN, Sahara Reporters
Boko Haram attacks on soft targets, last kicks of a dying horse	Buahri , Daily Trust
Boko haram has been defeated- Defence Minister,	The Nation
We’ve defeated boko haram- Buratai,	The punch
We have defeated boko haram, December deadline met- Lai Mohammed	Premium Times
We have defeated boko haram- Army spokesperson	Premium Times

These are some randomly selected media content from both traditional and new media. While the traditional media are expected to enjoy professionalism and gatekeeping before stories are released to the members of the public, it becomes worrisome that sometimes, professionalism is put into question from the nature of content coming from the journalists. On the other hand, the social media has made citizen journalists out of every member of the

society that cares to be one. While hiding under the cover of freedom of expression have been publishing misleading and sometimes inciting content to the public. Many had thought that the Internet gave birth to citizen journalism but when looked closely, it would be realised that digital technology facilitated the operation of citizen journalists. What reasons can we easily point out to be responsible for the publication of content that are capable of misleading the public or pitch them against each other? The following can be reasons:

Ownership

For most of the traditional media outlets, the ones that have the widest range of coverage are government owned. Little wonder, the radio and television stations could afford to publish stories of the Nigerian Army defeating Boko Haram without following up on such stories to give the members of the public the true situation of things on ground. For other media organisations that are supposed to be privately owned, too much alignment with politicians or political parties in the country has affected the quality of the lenses through which they view objectivity and balanced reporting. According to Ali (2013), similarly, publishers in Nigeria or media proprietors remain in business collaborating with the political class and by revenue generated from cover price of their titles and advertisement. To make more sales and remain in business in the face of kin competition most media use headlines and publish stories that would attract public attention. Recent development in the country has shown that either proprietors of media houses are directly involved in politics or they are sponsoring one political party or the other. Though this was the trend shortly before the independence of the country, there is documented evidence that suggests that ownership influence can affect the level of professionalism of the media.

Ignorance

The knowledge of Nigeria and its people is a major inhibiting factor to reportage of matters related to insecurity in the country. This ignorance has existed through the decades uncorrected and the media for a long time has not done anything to educate the public on this issue. An example of such display of ignorance is to suggest that everybody in the northern part of the country is Hausa by tribe. Then recently, it became Hausa-Fulani. For a good number of people from the northern part of the country who are not Hausa or Fulani by tribe, it will be a futile job trying to convince many people from the other parts of the country that there are other tribes. There are several other misconceptions (bordering on educational qualification, quality of certificate based on location of institution, religious inclination

among other things.) that are existing with us as a people that have continued to affect the quality of reportage in the media houses. The British Broadcasting Corporation has on many occasions used this sentence “the Muslim north and the Christian and animist south.” There are also instances of journalists with some of our major media organisations not being able to describe a location, sometimes either placing it in a wrong state or even geographical zone.

Personal experience

Events in the country leading to security breaches are many in Nigeria and these events have been in existence even before the independence of the country. In most cases, arising from the lines of divisions that are in existence. Crises especially bloody ones are usually bound to have casualties. For those who lost their loved ones in the crisis or who lost property or who suffered hardship because they were told that the crisis claimed those who were to have taken care of them, it becomes difficult for them to forget such experiences. To some, it may lead to harbouring some level of animosity towards any person from that region or tribe even when the other person is not directly involved in the misfortune. These personal experiences can lead to coloration of stories to malign the other people. Writing from an uninformed angle because it was published in a social media platform without verification of the story can be a costly mistake.

Lack of control on cyberspace

The freedom of the cyberspace and ability of everyone to post information irrespective of how sensitive the materials are is affecting the nature and quality of inciting stories that get to members of the public. In many cases, careless statements made by opinion leaders end up being used as gospel truth by their followers, not making effort to find out why the statement was made in the first place and considering the fact that it was on a social media handle. The traditional media is thrown into confusion in situations where they are trying to apply professionalism in some cases but out of the blues, the story is in cyberspace. To members of the public, if there were another angle to the story, why was it not given to them? The fact that there is no control over what people post on cyberspace and there are no penalties for offenders will encourage people with malicious intentions to post stories that would end up causing more crises in the country.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Two Step Flow Theory

The theory was propounded by Elihu Katz and has the simple assumption that the media does not have an overwhelming influence directly on the audience. According to Littlejohn & Foss (2009), the two-step flow of communication hypothesis states that personal influence exercised by other people normally plays a more critical role in everyday decision making than information obtained from mass media. The theory recognises the role played by opinion leaders in shaping the orientation of the audience in response to a media message. With respect to the Nigerian situation, the opinion leaders are the religious leaders, tribal leaders, leaders of right groups in the country, whose opinion on certain issues on insecurity as published in the mass media are imposed on their followers. The media helps by providing the frames to the audience. Opinion leaders on their own part look at these frames and interpret them to suit their own perception. Often times, cases of insecurity are reported on the media if no proactive measure is put in place by government, there will be reprisal attacks in other parts of the country that may not even have an idea of the genesis of the crisis.

Framing Theory

Obaje (2017) said journalistic framing practices describe what journalists do when they produce media texts that include certain frames and neglect others. Framing theory aims to identify schemes in which individuals perceive the world. According to Littlejohn & Foss (2009), the roots of Framing Theory are often attributed to the sociologist Erving Goffman who argued that interpretive designs constitute central elements of cultural belief systems. Goffman called these interpretive designs frames that we use in our day-to-day experience to make sense of the world. Frames help to reduce the complexity of information, but serve as a two-way process: Frames help interpret and reconstruct reality. Goffman's concept of frames has its conceptual roots in phenomenology, a philosophical approach that argues that the meaning of the world is perceived by individuals based on their lifeworld beliefs, experiences, and knowledge. In the case of this paper, frames as created by the media influence how people react to situations. The idea of a frame in relation to news has been widely and loosely used in place of terms such as frame of reference, context, theme, or even, news angle. In a journalistic context, stories are given meaning by reference to some particular „news value“ that connects one event with other similar ones.

Obaje (2017) cited Tankard (2001) that he suggested a list of 11 framing mechanisms or focal points for identifying and measuring new frames: a. Headlines b. Subheads c. Photos d. Photo captions e. Leads f. Source selection g. Quotes selection h. Pull quotes i. Logos j. Statistics and charts, and k. Concluding statements. Obaje (2017) conducted a research on the frames used by newspapers in covering the Boko Haram crisis and observed that emphasis on human interest angle of stories occupied the biggest space of all the stories on Boko Haram during the period of study. The language of news stories too was both therapeutic and inflammatory.

Agenda Setting Theory

According to Littlejohn & Foss (2009), Agenda-setting Theory, as originally formulated in 1972 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, explains the relationships between the emphasis that the mass media place on issues and the importance that media audiences attribute to those issues. Freeland (2012) explained that, in its most basic sense, agenda setting is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. The two most basic assumptions of agenda setting are: (1) the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it; (2) media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. The time frame for this is one of the most critical aspects of the agenda setting role in mass communications.

Agenda setting occurs through a cognitive process known as “accessibility,” which implies that the more frequently and prominently the news media covers an issue, the more that issue becomes accessible in the audience’s memory (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010). In other words, if the media continuously looks at a story while leaving out other, it is likely to be the most widely discussed issue in the society.

Conclusion

The media’s relevance in our society cannot be toyed with. The great American president, Thomas Jefferson gave a complete picture of the relevance of the press to a society when he said if he was to choose between a government and a newspaper, he would choose a newspaper. When properly used, the media would bring about national integration and by so doing, peace and tolerance will be the everywhere, thereby leading to development.

We operate in a world today, where technology has cleared all obstacles that would have prevented us from directly communicating with one another. In the words of Marshall McLuhan,

Ours is a brand-new world of allatonceness [sic]. 'Time' has ceased, 'space' has vanished. We now live in a global village....a simultaneous happening. We are back in acoustic space. We have begun again to structure the primordial feeling, the tribal emotions from which a few centuries of literacy divorced us. (McLuhan 1967:63)

From the facts available, while the government media in the country have the widest reach, they have been unable to fully satisfy the curiosity of the audience as long as quality news is concerned. Since people cannot get news from the source they ought to trust, they will get it from the grapevine. The government has either been silent on the issues relating to the insurgency situation in the country, thereby giving so much room for citizen journalists to take advantage of the situation and report on it. In situations where the government is openly announcing to Nigerians that Boko Haram has been defeated, the media may not have to come out to counter government's pronouncements but good feature reports on the situation in affected areas would give the members of the public a clear picture of what is on ground.

Abuse of cyberspace is a common thing with social media users. A misleading message placed on the social media could spark off riots and destructions. Sometimes, unprofessional use of pictures no matter how authentic they are could be very troubling to the mind. Conclusively, the media has every tool to enshrine professionalism and bring about trust from the public. If the convergence factor in the media can be used positively by media professionals, Nigerians would be forced to authenticate stories from Nigerian media organisations instead of always relying on international media organisations like the BBC, CNN, Aljazeera, to confirm stories that happened in Nigeria. This trend can only be achieved if the Nigerian leaders would put a halt on always giving press conferences to foreign media organisations.

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